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Book Review: *Spirit Beings and Sun Dancers: Black Hawk's Vision of the Lakota World* by Janet Catherine Berlo

James D. Keyser

USDA Forest Service, Pacific Northwest, Portland, Oregon

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exchange for credit at William Caton's Cheyenne River Reservation trade store. In 1994 these drawings were purchased for the Fenimore Art Museum in Cooperstown, New York. Working with Sioux elders, Janet Berlo has analyzed Black Hawk's drawings in a beautiful book that will interest Plains scholars. As an artist, Black Hawk drew seventeen typical ledger art warfare scenes, but probably more valuable are the drawings of his visions, Sioux cosmology and ceremonies, and even enemy Crow warriors. He also drew seventeen natural history studies showing fifteen different animal species.

The drawings, reproduced in large scale and vivid color, illustrate a wealth of material culture and ceremonial and social behaviors. As anthropological documents they are priceless, but some drawings may even help the Lakota reconstruct ceremonies now long forgotten. Thus for ethnographers and tribal people the book offers much for further study. For rock art scholars the ledger is equally valuable. Although Black Hawk's art style is less narrative than that of many of his contemporaries (he uses no track sequences, for example), his detailed illustrations will help identify material culture items in all other biographic art. The clear scenes of shamanic transformation, brought to life by the vision supplicant himself and carefully analyzed by Berlo, are also fascinating, particularly given the current question of the validity of the shamanic model for rock art interpretation.

Berlo's approach as an art historian will interest many non-specialists, but it probably accounts for my only point of dispute. In her detailed combat scene discussion she attributes two muzzle blasts from an enemy's single shot flintlock to a mistake by Black Hawk. But his other drawings (Plates 41, 43, 50) show this same multiple shot convention from weapons that also require reloading. Given his attention to detail, and the use of this convention throughout Plains biographic art, it appears that Berlo has simply not recognized the narrative aspect subtly embedded in some of Black Hawk's work.

Spirit Beings and Sun Dancers: Black Hawk's Vision of the Lakota World. By Janet Catherine Berlo. New York: George Braziller, Publishers, 2000. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. xvii + 190 pp. \$65.00.

In 1880 the Lakota warrior Black Hawk drew a series of seventy-six ledger drawings in

Although I would have appreciated a few more illustrations of comparative material, the footnotes are a goldmine of sources for researchers to find these on their own. Overall, Berlo has done a magnificent job of bringing Black Hawk's drawings to Plains scholars. Through her eyes we gain an intimate familiarity with Black Hawk—his religious beliefs, his powers of observation, and his scientific orientation. Based on the realistically rendered detail of his drawings I am struck by the likelihood that in another time Black Hawk could well have been an ethnologist or a natural scientist.

JAMES D. KEYSER
Regional Archaeologist
USDA Forest Service, Pacific Northwest
Portland, Oregon